

Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program FY 2010 Local Solicitation

Program Narrative for Rockingham County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office: Prosecution of Narcotics and Gang Related Crime

Objective: The Rockingham County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office is requesting a \$25,000 grant to fund the salary of a part time Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney who will specialize in prosecution of narcotics and gang related crime.

A. Problem and Proposed Strategy

One Commonwealth's Attorney's Office serves the needs of both Rockingham County and the City of Harrisonburg. The Shenandoah Valley has seen tremendous population growth over the past decade and a half, with a specific increased population in Rockingham County and Harrisonburg. This growth has resulted from increased economic development, and more particularly more immigrant and migrant workers coming to our community for employment. According to 2005 U.S. Census data, the City of Harrisonburg has a population of 40,438 and Rockingham County has a population of 71,251. This is an increase of approximately 3500 persons since the 2000 Census. In addition, over the course of the past several years, we have seen continued growth in our community.

Although the growth of our population has brought renewed economic life to our community, so too has it brought an increase in violent crime. We have seen a great increase in narcotics offenses and gang-related crimes. This increase in crimes has, of course, resulted in more prosecutions, thus increasing the caseload of our prosecutors and staff.

Our community has been afflicted by an increase in narcotics and gang-related crimes in several ways. Perhaps one of our greatest problems right now is significant

narcotics distribution. Narcotics distribution, particularly with regard to methamphetamine, is plaguing our community. We have also seen a rise in gang-related crime, ranging from gang “taggings” and graffiti to vicious assaults and a homicide.

With funding from this Grant opportunity, the Narcotics/Gang Violence Prosecutor would focus on narcotics distribution and gang-related violence, which often go hand-in-hand. Indeed, recent cases suggest a growing nexus between drug and gang activity. Rockingham County and Harrisonburg are fortunate to have the RUSH Drug Task Force, a collaboration of deputies, officers, and agents from the Rockingham County Sherriff’s Office, the Harrisonburg Police Department, and the Virginia State Police. We also have the CHARGE Gang Task Force which is comprised of deputies and officers from the county and city police forces. With this funding, this prosecutor would be able to work more closely with RUSH and CHARGE to implement our goals of a reduction of narcotics distribution and gang violence.

B. Goals and Objectives

The broad goals of this project are to reduce narcotics distribution, gang violence, and renew neighborhood safety. To accomplish these goals, we must be armed with funding and implementation plans to be able to aggressively prosecute offenders, educate the public on drug and gang violence, and communicate with the community to address their specific concerns with regard to their own safety. Our more specific goals are to reduce the influx of narcotics and gang activity in our Shenandoah Valley. Since narcotics distributors and gang participants are often the offenders which employ firearms in their activities, we must first try to reduce the firearms crimes and firearm access to felong. Fewer guns means fewer protections for drug dealers.

Our primary objective is to reduce the number of narcotics and gang-related crimes that are being committed in our community. This objective can be attained through increased visibility, by media attention on the punishments for crimes involving narcotics and gang-related violence, and by increased communication and collaborative efforts with local and federal law enforcement, including our drug and gang task forces.

C. Implementation Plan

With this funding, our narcotics and gang prosecutor will work closely with local law enforcement, including our drug and gang task forces. Collaboration with law enforcement will assist both the police in being advised of possible charges and the prosecutor in aggressively prosecuting cases arising from drug and gang arrests. The prosecutor will also maintain a relationship with other law enforcement agencies such as ATF, FBI, DEA, and the U.S. Attorney's Office so as to coordinate enforcement efforts and increase prosecution for violent offenders.

In addition, our prosecutor will help educate the community about the dangers of narcotics distribution and gang-related violence. In working with law enforcement, we would have our prosecutor attend town halls meetings and help instruct community residents, particularly the youth, on how to protect themselves from narcotics and gang-related violence.

The narcotics and gang prosecutor will also remain well-versed in both state and federal laws to assess maximum penalties for narcotics and gang-related crime. This will include an assessment as to whether better results would be achieved in the federal system, in which case the prosecutor would coordinate with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Specific Goal Dates:

Goal/Objective:	Date/Time Frame for Goal/Objective:
Advisory group comprised of Prosecutor, Deputy from Rockingham County Sherriff's Office, Officer from Harrisonburg Police Department, representative from RUSH Drug Task Force, representative from CHARGE Gang Task Force	Begin October 2010, monthly meetings
Monthly "town hall" meetings and/or educational classes which will be open to members of the community	Begin by November 2010, monthly meetings

D. Program Evaluation/Performance Measures

The narcotics and gang violence prosecutor will collect data on the number and type of cases he/she handles. Further, he/she will make specific notes as to whether he/she collaborated with the Drug and/or Gang Task Forces on a case. The prosecutor will also keep notes as to the attendance at meetings, public questions/concerns, and class topics, which can be attached as part of the semi-annual progress report.